

## Philippians 4

### Promises! Promises! Promises!

#### Paul declares our abundance in Christ

**Sentence 49 (4:1) Therefore my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and my crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.**

Paul has shown the saints how to stand firm in Christ. This is by looking to the future goal in Christ and regarding it as a prize to be won. Exercise yourself unto godliness (1Tim 4:7). The saints, converted under Paul's preaching, are his boast in the Day of Jesus Christ. They are the crown of his missionary efforts, so he rejoices in them (1Thess 2:20). Above all, he agonises over their spiritual state and their capacity to survive in the faith. Even today, there are many casualties in the spiritual life. It is so easy to get offended in God and justify our own interpretation of our experiences. We are indeed in a spiritual warfare. The devil blows us right out of the water. We fall off the back of the truck.

**Sentence 50 (4:2) I appeal to Euodia and I appeal to Syntyche to agree (think the same) in the Lord.**

Paul has heard of dissension in the Body. He is appealing directly to these two women to come to some agreement for the Lord's sake. Unity is such a goal in the church. This is not uniformity (everything the same) but unity whereby we agree to cooperate with one another for the Lord's sake. This is to prevent party spirit which is a root of heresy (Gal 5:20). This cultivates division in the church. Sometimes heresy (false teaching) creates the division; sometimes division (party spirit) creates (justifies) the heresy.

**Sentence 51 (4:3) I ask you also, true yoke-fellow, to assist these women, who struggled alongside me in the gospel with Clement and the rest of my co-workers whose names are in the Book of Life.**

We do not know who this fellow yoke-bearer is. But he is more than a co-worker. He is a fellow yoke-bearer. The image is of two oxen joined together by a yoke to pull a plough. A fellow yoke-bearer shares the pressure and weight of the burden. These two women contended for the faith alongside Paul and other co-workers who are not referred to as yoke-bearers. But Paul asserts that their names are written in the Book of Life. The Book of Life is mentioned mainly in the Book of Revelation (Rev 3:5;13:8;17:8;20:12;20:15;21:27;22:19). The concept is mentioned in the OT in Ex 32:32-33;Deut 29:20;Pss 40:7-8;56:8;69:28;139:16). Those whose names are not written in the Book of Life are cast into the Lake of Fire or the second death (Rev 20:15). Only God can open the Book of Life (Rev 10:12). Whose names are written in it?

**Sentence 52 (4:4a) Rejoice in the Lord always.**

Joy is commanded. We are always to enter into the spirit realm of Joy that is created for us to walk in. We do not have to feel full of joy for it to happen. Indeed our feelings (spirit movements) may well resist joy. But we are commanded to enter this spirit space and to assert spirit joy in our spirit place.

**Sentence 53 (4:4b) Again I say, rejoice!**

Paul re-asserts this spirit command. It has to be the answer in the midst of our worldly concerns. The joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh 8:10; Ps 21:1).

**Sentence 54 (4:5a) Let your reasonableness be known to all.**

Here reasonableness is often translated as gentleness. But the basic Greek word (epieikes) used here is associated with fairness. Reasonableness, moderation and being open to reason (able to be reasoned with, not bigoted) is a sign of the wisdom from above (James 3:17). We are not to hide behind bigotry and dogmatism with unlistening and unteachable attitudes.

**Sentence 55 (4:5b) The Lord is at hand.**

The Christian is always living in the end times. Christian history ends with the Judgement. Only then will Jesus Christ be revealed and all our Christian hope be justified. The truth of God will then be demonstrated and our Christian claims be proven. In the meantime we live by faith and we say 'Come Lord Jesus' (Rev 22:20).

**Sentence 56 (4:6-7) Be anxious for nothing but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and thoughts through Christ Jesus.**

There is no place for anxiety in the Christian life (Mtt 5:25-34). We need the rule of God in our lives. We need to come under the discipline of God's provision (not our own sense of provision). God's ordering for our lives may well be different from our ordering of our lives and circumstances. To prayer we add supplication (which is close to begging). This is always done in a spirit of thanks to God. God knows our requests before we ask (Mtt 6:32). But we are still to make them known to the spirit world. These are any and every request. There is no limit to what we can ask God for. We are the ones who place limits on our asking. The basis for trust in God is the peace of God, which we do not fully understand, but which has the capacity to guard our heart and thought life from the fiery assaults of Satan and the culture (Eph 6:16).

**Sentence 57 (4:8) Finally brethren, whatever things are true, honourable, righteous, pure, lovely and well-spoken of, if there is any excellence, anything praiseworthy, then think on (meditate, consider) these things.**

We become established in God by setting our mind on certain things. The things that we are to set our mind on are to be true, inspiring of reverence, encouraging the right/ just action, pure, admirable (lovable) and noble. Wherever there is excellence (virtue) or something worthy of praise, then we are to consider it. This is in any area of human or non-human endeavour. Everything is grist (supply) to the divine mill (procedures). Christians do not have control over all goodness and virtue. Let us honour it when and where we see it. Can I recognise worthiness when I see it?

**Sentence 58 (4:9) The things that you learned and received and heard and saw in me these do and the God of peace will be with you.** Paul is not embarrassed to set himself up as an example of Christian behaviour. He says, Imitate me (1Cor 4:16; 11:1). We are to copy examples (Eph 5:1; 1Thess 1:6; Heb 6:12; 3John 1:11). This is a way to guarantee the presence of the peace of God.

**Sentence 59 (4:10) But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again, though you surely did care but had no opportunity (to show it).**

Paul rejoices in the care that the saints show for him.

**Sentence 60 (4:11) Not that I speak about lack, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.**

Paul does not want to emphasise need because he has learned to be content no matter what state he is in. This is a spirit discipline. It is something that Paul has had to learn. Jesus Christ learned obedience by the things that He suffered (endured) (Heb 5:8). Paul speaks of godly contentment (1Tim 6:6). We must learn how to be content by believing in the wise provision of God. We can spend years pursuing things that are not necessary for the Kingdom but may be perceived as necessary by us in the culture.

**Sentence 61 (4:12-13) I know how to be humbled and how to abound; in everything and in all circumstances I have learned to be full**

**and to be empty (hungry), both to abound and to suffer lack; I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**

The constant in Paul's life is Jesus Christ. What varies is his circumstances. He can have plenty and he can experience lack. He knows how to abound and how to suffer want. What matters is his conformity to Jesus Christ and His dying. So Paul can say that he dies daily (1Cor 15:31). His needs are of no concern. What matters is the supply of Christ, which never fails according to kingdom standards but may vary according to worldly standards. Christ Himself, is a constant, never failing supply. Everything else is relative to having Christ. Paul says that he prevails through the One who empowers him. In Christ is the capacity to prevail (survive), at least, to not be destroyed in one's spirit (2Cor 11:22-28).

**Sentence 62 (4:14) Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.**

Paul is not blind to his condition, although he does not let his circumstances destroy him. He appreciates the concern of the saints.

**Sentence 63 (4:15) Now you Philippians know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no one shared in the matter of giving and receiving except you.**

Paul remembers their generosity in sharing the costs of the gospel.

**Sentence 64 (4:16) For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent help for my needs more than once.**

On Paul's second and third missionary journeys he went from Philippi to Thessalonica in northern Greece.

**Sentence 65 (4:17) Not that I seek the gift but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.**

Christians learn to give. There is a blessing in giving. Jesus said, 'Give and it shall be given to you good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be placed in your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you receive' (Lk 6:38). So we determine how much we will receive. This is the spirit law of giving. If you want then do not give; if you give you will not want. Get the flow flowing. The person most useful to the Kingdom of God is not the one who has much, but the one through whom much passes. Get hold of this truth of spirit financing. For the Philippians, their giving abounds to their account by spirit law.

**Sentence 66 (4:18) I have all things and I abound having been filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things from you, a fragrant (sweet-smelling) odour, an acceptable sacrifice well-pleasing to God.**

Paul resorts to the spirit significance of what the Philippians have done for him. Using Tabernacle language, he describes it as a sweet-smelling odour (Lev 1:9,13,17) and as an acceptable sacrifice that is well-pleasing to the Lord (Rom 12:1).

**Sentence 67 (4:19) And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**

God supplies need although He does not respond to need. God responds to faith. God supplies our need, not according to our measure, but according to His measure in glory in all the significance of who Jesus is. May I rest in the provision of God.

**Sentences 68-72 (4:20-23) Now to our God and Father be glory for ever and ever, Amen. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen.**

This benediction gives glory to God.

**'All' in this chapter.** It is interesting to note the use of 'all', 'every', 'any' and 'whatever' in this chapter:

1. :4 rejoice always.
2. :5 let your reasonableness be known to all.
3. :6 in everything let your requests be made known to God.
4. :7 the peace of God passes all understanding.
5. :8 whatever is true, noble...
6. :8 if there is any excellence or praise.
7. :11 I have learned in whatever state I am to be content.
8. :12 everywhere and in all things I have learned ...
9. :13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
10. :18 Indeed I have all and abound.
11. :19 my God shall supply all your need.
12. :21 greet every saint.
13. :22 all the saints greet you.
14. :23 the grace of Christ be with you all.

#### **Summary**

1. Stand fast in the Lord.
2. Help those struggling to maintain unity.
3. Rejoice always in the Lord.
4. Be able to be reasoned with.
5. The Lord is at hand.
6. Do not be anxious. Let God know what you need in faith.
7. The peace of God will guard your heart and mind.
8. Set your mind on excellence in all its forms.
9. Imitate good example.
10. Learn to be content wherever you are.
11. Learn to live with plenty or with scarcity.
12. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
13. Giving creates a fruit that abounds to the giver.
14. Gifts are a sacrifice acceptable to God.
15. God will supply all our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.